

gender. Then, in 1988, Senator Kennedy extended the act's protections to those Americans with disabilities and families with children. Both of these expansions received broad bipartisan support and were actually signed into law.

As Senator Brooke said 44 years ago:

Fair housing is not a political issue, except as we make it one by the nature of our debate. It is purely and simply a matter of equal justice for all Americans.

Well said by Senator Brooke 44 years ago.

Fair housing has a bipartisan history and we have a chance to do it again. We can do it by protecting two additional groups from housing discrimination. My Ending Housing Discrimination Against Servicemembers and Veterans Act, S. 3283, is needed and it is needed right now. It amends the Fair Housing Act to protect veterans and servicemembers from housing discrimination.

By passing this bill right away, the Senate can say affirmatively and immediately that veterans and servicemembers deserve the same rights to housing as anyone else. This is a no-brainer. The Commander in Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States has endorsed my bill, as referenced for people looking on, saying:

Senator Brown's work to protect servicemembers and veterans from housing discrimination is very positive. It is unconscionable that members of our military and veterans should fear not being able to rent or buy a home because of their status as a veteran.

This bill will correct the issue.

By passing this bill right away, we can, once again, say to those veterans and servicemembers that they have our pride and respect. We need the action right now. No veteran or servicemember should ever face the indignity of being denied housing solely on the basis of their service.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 and Senator Kennedy's amendments in 1988 passed with overwhelming support. We should be able to do the same. I urge all my colleagues to cosponsor this important piece of legislation and work for its immediate and unanimous passage. It is time to fix this shortcoming in our Nation's housing laws and it is, quite frankly, the right thing to do.

I would like to also take this opportunity to wish the U.S. Army a happy 237th birthday. I was honored to go to the cake-cutting last night and honor those who have done so much for our great country.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield back all postcloture time on the nomination of Mari Carmen Aponte.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Mari Carmen Aponte, of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraor-

dinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of El Salvador?

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

FLOOD INSURANCE REFORM AND MODERNIZATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, very quickly, that was the last vote today. It appears we will have no votes tomorrow. But Senator STABENOW and Senator ROBERTS are working very diligently to come up with an agreement on the farm bill. We are going to have a vote Monday evening. We have not decided exactly what that will be on. We have a number of different alternatives. But we hope we can have common sense prevail and be able to come up with an agreement, if for no other reason than to recognize the hard work of the two managers of this bill.

It is so important we get this done. There are issues we are going to vote on, one of which Senator KERRY will talk about. There are relevant amendments. We have a lot of them. We will agree to vote on those. We are trying to work out also the nonrelevant amendments, and we are not there yet.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

APONTE NOMINATION

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I am grateful we finally have been able to get the nomination of Mari Aponte confirmed. I thank Senator MENENDEZ for managing for me.

I thank our colleagues in the Senate for finally getting our nominee in place and confirming her to be the Ambassador to El Salvador. I think it is long overdue. She will do a terrific job, and I am grateful to colleagues that we finally have, in fact, confirmed this nomination.

Mr. President, I understand I can proceed as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURE REFORM

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I will do so, but I wish to speak with respect to an amendment on the farm bill for when we get back to that.

I wish to call to the attention of my colleagues the fact that in 2008, the

farm bill's conferees inserted a provision that transfers authority of the regulation of catfish, but only catfish—it was the only particular item singled out to be transferred—from the Food and Drug Administration to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The provision was not debated in either body. It is one of those things that, as we all know, people have increasingly gotten incensed about in the public as well as around here, in the Congress itself.

Because it was transferred over to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the USDA subsequently published a proposal in order to carry out the new mandate it had been given to regulate catfish. But that proposal has remained, and properly so, stalled in the regulatory process. I say "properly so" because it serves no public interest, it is costly for taxpayers, and it is duplicative and confrontational with other entities that are engaged in that kind of oversight. As a result, it will invite trade retaliation abroad and put us on a train wreck, if you will, of sort of excessive regulatory conflict.

Senator MCCAIN and I have joined together, along with a bipartisan group of our colleagues, to offer an amendment, amendment No. 2199, to repeal the 2008 catfish language. If we don't repeal it, the USDA is going to try to continue to proceed forward in this regulatory train wreck.

Let me give a little background. In February of 2011, the GAO cited the proposed catfish regulatory program—cited it as part of its report on those programs that were at high risk for waste, fraud, and abuse. Then, in March of 2011, the GAO again called this program duplicative as part of a totally separate report. Then, just last month, the GAO produced an extensive and detailed analysis of why this program is not only costly and duplicative but why it would have no food safety benefit. If it is not going to have any food safety benefit, it is costly, it is duplicative, the obvious question for all of us is: Why? What is going on here?

All of us care about jobs in our communities. Every State is always vying to find a way to try to guarantee that the jobs it has are protected and that it is creating more jobs. We all understand that. So I don't have any animus against any particular Senator fighting to do that. In this case, a number of catfish producers in the South managed to get protection that takes care of them but hurts a lot of other folks in a lot of other parts of the country. So it may be good for catfish producers in a few places in the South, but it is bad for consumers in the United States generally because it raises costs, and it is very bad for seafood processors and for communities, in my State among others, but in other States in the country on the west coast and east coast. There are employers in my State that would like to process and distribute products that come from various other places, including abroad, and they